



USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PERFORMANCE AUDIT

FEBRUARY 2014



CITY OF DURHAM
AUDIT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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To: Audit Services Oversight Committee
From: Germaine Brewington, Director
Audit Services Department
Date: **February 24, 2014**
Re: Use of Social Media Performance Audit (February 2014)

The Department of Audit Services completed the report on the Use of Social Media Performance Audit dated February 2014. The purpose of the audit was to determine if adequate controls over using social media as a communication tool are in place.

This report presents the observations, results, and recommendations of the Use of Social Media Performance Audit dated February 2014. City management concur with the recommendations made. Management's response to the recommendations is included with the attached report.

The Department of Audit Services appreciates the contribution of time and other resources from employees of the Office of Public Affairs in the completion of this audit.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Office of Public Affairs directs and supports the City's communications efforts to Durham residents through proactive and responsive activities, including media relations, publications, advertising, special events, website content management and government television.

Social media is one of the tools used by City departments to support the City's communication efforts. According to the Office of Public Affairs policy "Guidelines and Approval Requirements for All Uses of Social Media Networking Tools" social media is defined as online technologies and practices that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives. Social media can take many different forms, including text, images, audio and video. A few prominent examples of social media applications are Wikipedia, Myspace, Facebook and Gather.com. The City of Durham has multiple social media accounts to help inform and engage residents. Approximately 8 departments manage social media accounts, of which Facebook is the most commonly used. According to the list provided by the Office of Public Affairs, the City has approximately 18 social media accounts.

The Office of Public Affairs has established a City-wide social media policy "Guidelines and Approval Requirements for All Uses of Social Media Networking Tools". The purpose of the policy is to ensure departments that choose to use social media sites do so in a manner that is properly managed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The purpose of the audit was to determine if adequate controls over using social media as a communication tool are in place.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient and appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Results in Brief

The use of social media as a communication tool by the City is still evolving and the Office of Public Affairs is in the process of establishing plans/strategies for social media engagement. The Office of Public Affairs has established a policy to guide departments that manage social media accounts. Opportunities for improvement exist in the following areas:

- The policy needs to be enhanced to incorporate additional guidance; and
- The departments need to start tracking social media performance.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The objectives of the audit were to:

- Determine if a comprehensive policy exists governing the use of social media;
- Determine if social media accounts are being used to effectively engage, inform, and interact with residents;
- Determine if adequate monitoring exists; and
- Ensure that the City can adequately address security and other risks introduced by social media.

Scope

The scope of the audit included all current practices concerning the use of social media at the Office of Public Affairs and other departments that use social media accounts.

Methodology

Audit staff performed the following procedures to accomplish the objectives of the audit:

- 1) Obtained and reviewed the policies and procedures pertaining to social media use;
- 2) Reviewed policy “Guidelines and Approval Requirements for All Uses of Social Media Networking Tools” to determine if it was comprehensive ;
- 3) Obtained a list of all social media accounts of the City;
- 4) Verified that the list of all social media accounts was complete and accurate;
- 5) Evaluated the advertising avenues for social media awareness employed by the Office of Public Affairs and other departments that use social media accounts;
- 6) Documented and assessed the strategy used by the Office of Public Affairs and the departments for increasing resident engagement through social media;

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

- 7) Over a three month period, reviewed social media sites and determined:
 - a. How often social media sites were updated;
 - b. What type of information was posted on the site;
 - c. Extent of the discussion; and
 - d. Response time to comments and or negative posts.
- 8) Interviewed the site administrators to ascertain their level of involvement with updating and maintaining the social media accounts;
- 9) Evaluated the monitoring/performance tracking tools for social media sites and determined if they are adequately used for decision-making purposes;
- 10) Described the monitoring process at each department using social media accounts;
- 11) Determined if measures and targets have been established to monitor effectiveness of using social media accounts;
- 12) Verified processes in place to ensure integrity and accuracy of data; and
- 13) Inquired whether a crisis management plan existed.

During the audit, staff also maintained awareness to the potential existence of fraud.

AUDIT RESULTS

City staff are not in compliance with certain aspects of the current social media policy. The Policy is also not comprehensive.

In practice, the following deviations from policy were noted:

- 1) The policy states that “all departments considering the development of a social media site must submit a written proposal to the Office of Public Affairs explaining why this tool is appropriate for their target audience prior to site development”:
 - Written proposals only existed for five of the 14 sites (excluding 4 City of Durham accounts administered by the Office of Public Affairs) listed on the social media site directory maintained by the Office of Public Affairs. In addition, signed social media site approval forms only existed for two of the sites. According to management, some sites predate the Social Media Policy and therefore written proposals do not exist for those sites. Without approval forms, an employee could create a City –run social media site without the knowledge or guidance of the Public Affairs staff. This could increase the risk to the City, as the site may not be administered in accordance with the City’s social media policy.
- 2) According to policy, “Once the site is developed, all usernames and passwords associated with the new site must be provided to the Office of Public Affairs as well as the department director or his/her designee. This practice was not followed by the site administrators.
 - Site administrators for Facebook use their personal accounts to log onto the City account. Therefore, it would not be practical to require site administrators to provide personal information to the Office of Public Affairs staff. Twitter accounts login information is independent of personal information and therefore it would be practical to impose this requirement; however it is currently not practiced.

AUDIT RESULTS

The current practice is for departments to identify the names of the site administrators for each page.

In addition, the policy did not provide guidance on the following issues:

- 1) The policy did not provide guidance on responding to/dealing with negative comments. In addition it did not address timeframes for responding to positive or negative comments. In the absence of not addressing response times in the City wide policy, it also did not require individual department's to develop timelines for responding to positive/negative comments.
- 2) According to policy, site administrators should not post infrequently or auto-post; however the policy does not define what constitutes "posting infrequently."
- 3) The policy states that departments should consider developing a monthly evaluation plan. The departments did not maintain monthly evaluation plans. The site administrators did not document or keep track of their monitoring results. In order to gain a clear understanding of the effectiveness of social media use, best practices suggest that the City track the performance of its social media accounts. The policy should require departments to track performance quarterly if not monthly.
- 4) The policy did not require deactivating City maintained social media sites that are updated infrequently.
- 5) The policy does not provide guidance on securing social media accounts. Best practice suggests that appropriate measures should be taken to minimize security risk in order to prevent fraud or unauthorized access to social media sites. For instance, the Public Affairs specialist has added an extra layer of security to the Twitter account by requiring login approval that is tied to her City cell phone. Also, since Facebook is set up through her personal account, she has setup email notifications for her Facebook pages so that Facebook alerts her when the account is being accessed from an unfamiliar

location or browser. These practices should be encouraged for use by other site administrators.

Social media performance is not tracked (except for the City wide site)

Best practice indicates that measurement and evaluation are essential features of any communication strategy or tactic. In order to gain a clear understanding of the effectiveness of social media use, best practices suggest that the City track the performance of its social media accounts. Performance is tracked and documented for the City of Durham's main Facebook page and the City's Twitter account. Performance indicators include reach, impressions and engaged users. The other site administrators look at the analytics for Facebook for ideas on the kinds of posts that get the most views, but they do not document the analytics. The departmental site administrators that use Twitter do not maintain any documentation. The site administrators are mostly using the analytics to determine the time to post information rather than trying to determine reach, impression and engagement. Clear key performance indicators are not established by departments to use and gauge their performance. It is difficult to establish long term strategies to effectively engage residents if the analytics are not tracked and analyzed.

AUDIT RESULTS

Social media accounts are primarily used to inform residents rather than being used to effectively engage and interact with residents. Use of social media as a communication tool is in its infancy and the Office of Public Affairs is developing strategies to effectively engage and interact with residents.

The use of social media as a communication tool by the City is still evolving and the Office of Public Affairs is in the process of establishing plans/strategies for social media engagement. The site administrators are still in the process of understanding their audience and establishing strategies on how to increase resident engagement. The Office of Public Affairs along with departmental staff participated in training provided by IBM on developing strategies for social media.

During testing, the audit staff found that the content of the social media pages is mostly informational in nature and the content is not presented to encourage feedback. The important part about using social media is to engage with your audience; otherwise it might not be an effective communication tool. Also, an infrequently updated social media account can be worse than having no presence at all. It might project a negative image rather than a positive image.

Audit staff monitored the sites for a period of three months. The following are the results of testing:

- For citizen engagement (defined as comments by Twitter or Facebook users) only five social media sites out of the 18 averaged two comments or more per week over a three-month period. Some site administrators mentioned some frustration on posting questions and other similar posts on their social media sites and then receiving no response.

AUDIT RESULTS

- The Office of Public Affairs encourages social media sites to be updated at least two times a week. For the 18 sites included in testing:
 - Four social media sites were updated less than 2 times per week over a three month period.
 - Ten social media sites were updated on average between 2 to 5 times per week.
 - Four social media sites were updated more than 5 times per week.

The list of sites maintained by the Office of Public Affairs is not complete.

The Office of Public Affairs should maintain a complete listing of all social media accounts of the City. Audit staff performed a key word search on various social media tools to verify that all official City social media accounts are included in the list. The search revealed some accounts which appear to be legitimate City of Durham accounts however, were not part of the list provided by the Office of Public Affairs. These accounts are as follows:

- Office of Economic and Workforce Development – YouTube account
- Durham Saves Water Now – YouTube account
- City of Durham Fire Department Station # 11 – Facebook page
- Durham NC Storm Water – Twitter site
- Cultural Heritage Happening in Durham, NC – BlogSpot
- City of Durham Fire Department – Twitter account
- Department of Parks and Recreation – Instagram Account
- Parks and Recreation Cultural Heritage Blog

Maintaining an incomplete list of social media sites operated by the City, can increase the risk to the City, of having accounts that do not adhere to policy or are not monitored for compliance with policy.

AUDIT RESULTS

A key word search of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube also identified one account that appeared to be unauthorized:

- City wide – A twitter account, not belonging to the City, was identified that uses the City's logo as a profile picture. The use of the City's logo could cause confusion for some residents.

The City did not have a documented social media crisis management plan

A social media crisis management plan is important to the City in order to mitigate risk and protect the City's reputation. The City did not have a documented social media crisis management plan. According to the Public Affairs Specialist, as they continue to develop and add structure to the City social media strategy, they will put in a formal crisis management plan.

Conclusion

Overall, the use of social media as a communication tool by the City is still evolving and the Office of Public Affairs is in the process of establishing plans/strategies for social media engagement. The Office of Public Affairs has established a policy to guide departments that manage social media accounts. Opportunities for improvement exist in the following areas:

- The policy needs to be enhanced to incorporate additional guidance; and
- The departments need to start tracking social media performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

The Office of Public Affairs should make the following revisions to policy, “Guidelines and Approval Requirements for All Uses of Social Media Networking Tools”:

- Refine the existing requirement of providing all usernames and passwords associated with the new site to the Office of Public Affairs to include only certain types of social media accounts;
- Provide guidance on dealing with negative comments;
- Provide guidance on response time frames for comments;
- Define what “posting infrequently” means;
- Require departments to track performance indicators (quarterly if not monthly) and share the information at the Public Affairs Liaison Committee meetings;
- Require a review by the Office of Public Affairs of all City-wide sites for post frequency and deactivation of the City maintained social media sites that are not updated frequently;
- Provide guidance to decrease security risks; and
- Include a crisis management plan.

Recommendation 2

The Office of Public Affairs should establish key performance indicators that departments can use to gauge their performance and continue their efforts to enhance engagement via social media sites.

Recommendation 3

The Office of Public Affairs should maintain a complete directory of all social media sites managed by the City. In addition, the Office of Public Affairs should obtain written proposals for all existing social media sites.

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE



**CITY OF
DURHAM**

Memo to: Germaine F. Brewington, Director of Audit Services
From: Beverly B. Thompson, Public Affairs Director
Date: February 11, 2014
Subject: Management's Response
Use of Social Media Performance Audit
(February 2014)

The following is the management's response to the Use of Social Media Performance Audit dated February 2014.

Recommendation 1

The Office of Public Affairs should make the following revisions to policy, "Guidelines and Approval Requirements for All Uses of Social Media Networking Tools":

- Refine the existing requirement of providing all usernames and passwords associated with the new site to the Office of Public Affairs to include only certain types of social media accounts;
- Provide guidance on dealing with negative comments;
- Provide guidance on response time frames for comments;
- Define what "posting infrequently" means;
- Require departments to track performance indicators (quarterly if not monthly) and share the information at the Public Affairs Liaison Committee meetings;
- Require a review by the Office of Public Affairs of all City-wide sites for post frequency and deactivation of the City maintained social media sites that are not updated frequently;
- Provide guidance to decrease security risks; and
- Include a crisis management plan.

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE

Management's Response:

We concur. Management is in full agreement with the recommendation.

LaToya Sutton, the social media specialist, will revise the policy as recommended.

Implementation Date: April 2014.

Recommendation 2

The Office of Public Affairs should establish key performance indicators that departments can use to gauge their performance and continue their efforts to enhance engagement via social media sites.

Management's Response:

We concur. Management is in full agreement with the recommendation.

The Office of Public Affairs will strongly urge departmental social media administrators to keep monthly reports of the following performance indicators, and submit quarterly reports to the PA Office for tracking:

- *Reach*
- *Impressions*
- *Engaged Users (Facebook)*
- *Likes/Unlikes (Facebook)*
- *People Talking About (Facebook)*
- *Link clicks*
- *Retweets (Twitter)*
- *Mentions (Twitter)*
- *Views (Youtube)*

In addition, LaToya Sutton, the social media specialist, will provide informal training on social media performance measurement during bi-monthly meetings with departmental administrators.

Implementation Date: March 2014

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE

Recommendation 3

The Office of Public Affairs should maintain a complete directory of all social media sites managed by the City. In addition, the

Office of Public Affairs should obtain written proposals for all existing social media sites.

Management's Response:

We concur. Management is in full agreement with the recommendation.

The Office of Public Affairs will determine which sites do not currently have written proposals and will ask those administrators to submit their proposal.

Implementation Date: March 2014